

Workforce Supply

- **Unemployment is low, but the region has a 53,400-strong available labor pool, that includes 44,700 underemployed workers who are looking for better jobs.**

The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer. For the one-way commute, 61 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 55 percent will go 20 or more extra miles. Underemployment ranged from 22.6 percent for Marengo County to 34.5 percent for Wilcox County. Dallas County has the largest available labor in the region and Perry County has the smallest.

Labor Force	42,361
Employed	39,005
Underemployment rate	28.5%
Number of underemployed workers	11,116
Unemployed	3,356
Available labor pool	14,472

Note: Based on August 2005 labor force data.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

- **In 2000, about 7,200 residents commuted out of the region for work, compared to 6,200 in-commuters.**

Dallas, Marengo, and Wilcox counties had net commuter inflow. Significant commuting within the region suggests that the roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers as impeded movement of workers can slow economic development.

The one-way commute takes less than 20 minutes for 53 percent of workers, but more than 40 minutes for 18 percent, with 4 percent taking more than an hour. The commute is less than 10 miles for 43 percent of workers; about 28 percent travel more than 25 miles one-way and 12 percent exceed 45 miles.

- **Region 6 has lower educational attainment and population growth than the state.**

Of the age 25 and over population, 75 percent are high school graduates and 19 percent hold bachelor's or higher degrees in Alabama, compared to 67 percent and 12 percent, respectively, for Region 6. Educational attainment for all counties in the region is below the state level. Population fell 3.1 percent from 2000-2004, but grew nearly 2 percent for the state. The 2000-2010 projected population growth is -3.3 percent for the region and 8.8 percent for Alabama.

Workforce Demand

- **By sector, the top five employers in the region are manufacturing; health care and social assistance; educational services, retail trade; and public administration.**

These five sectors provided 24,536 jobs, 69 percent of the region total in the second quarter of 2004. Two of these leading employers, manufacturing and educational services, had higher average monthly wages than the \$2,312 regional average.

- **On average about 2,000 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004; average quarterly net job flows was 52.**

Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

- **No occupation is both high-demand and fast-growing. Criteria used are at least 5 average annual job openings (for high-demand occupations) and an annual growth rate of 1.8 percent in the number of jobs (for fast-growing occupations).**

The top five high-demand occupations are Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; General and Operations Managers; Food Batchmakers; Registered Nurses; and Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer. The top five fast-growing occupations are Parking Lot Attendants; Painters, Transportation Equipment; Network Systems and Data Communications Analysts; Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators & Tenders, Metal & Plastic; and Cutting, Punching, & Press Machine Setters, Operators, & Tenders, Metal & Plastic.

- **The top 50 highest earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and education fields.**

Almost all high-earning occupations require bachelor's or higher degrees. Of the top ten high-earning occupations, four are in health and three are in management.

- **Fast-growing or high-demand occupations are generally not high-earning.**

Of 14 selected high-demand, 11 selected fast-growing, and 50 selected high-earning occupations, only one occupation—General and Operations Managers—is both high-earning and in high-demand. One occupation, Network Systems and Data Communications Analysts, is both high-earning and fast-growing.

Workforce Investment Advisory Areas



- **Employment is declining, but at a slower rate than the labor force.**

Implications for Workforce Development

- **The region's labor force must grow faster to meet workforce demand either by increasing the participation rate, growing population, or both.**

This is complicated by the region's declining population. More jobs in the region can reduce commuter outflow and reverse the population trend, but also presents challenges to workforce development. Initiatives addressing these challenges might (i) focus on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth and illiterate adults), (ii) facilitate in-commuting, and (iii) help communities gain new residents, especially since increasing the number of residents is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting. Hard-to-serve populations are often outside of the mainstream economy, poor, and have difficulty finding work. They are potential labor force participants and investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap this resource. A lack of job opportunities is of major concern to this region.

- **Economic development should target high-earning industries and workforce development should ensure availability of workers for such industries.**

High-demand and high-growth occupations are common to the leading, but not very high wage, employment sectors. Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the regional economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries. Workforce development efforts should prepare workers for these industries.

- **Training in basic skills is very important, but high-earning jobs need resource management, complex problem solving, and systems skills as well.**

Basic skills are important for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs. This indicates a strong need for training in such skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills while enhancing these basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they

can help to identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

- **A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset.**

Skill and education requirements for jobs keep rising and emphasize the need to raise educational attainment in the region. This challenge to workforce development also presents opportunities for economic development with activities that involve postsecondary and higher education institutions. Higher incomes to graduates from these institutions would help to raise personal income for the region. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment and technological skills for the region is an effective economic development strategy. Workforce development should continuously educate individuals, the public, and legislators about the private and social returns from education. This strategy will both encourage individuals to raise their educational attainment level and promote public support for education.

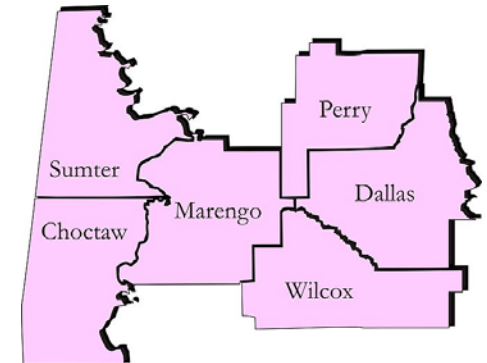
- **Ongoing worker retraining programs should be continued and enhanced.**

This point is well noted in the WIAA Region 6 2005 regional advisory council's annual report with a call for funding for various programs. Alabama has a number of tools to assess, retrain, and place dislocated workers, especially those affected by outsourcing. These programs should be continued to ensure that the labor force participation rate does not fall.

- **Together, workforce development and economic development can build a strong and well-diversified regional economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.**

WIAA Region 6

Workforce Report I Summary, 2005



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Tim Alford, *Director*
 Linda Bryan, *Executive Assistant*
 Alice Schaum, *Regional Advisory Council Coordinator*
 401 Adams Avenue, Suite 590
 Montgomery, AL 36104
 Phone: (334) 353-1490, 1686, 5382
 Fax: (334) 353-2005
 OWD@adeca.state.al.us
 http://www.owd.alabama.gov